

A Homily for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity from Fr Allan

“God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.” I know a Baptist minister who has this text tattooed on his arm in Aramaic. He chose to do this because although it’s only a short and pithy quotation, it sort of sums up what Christianity is all about.

Someone I know died this week after a very short illness. By today’s standards he was elderly but he had been in good health and mentally, he was as sharp as a button! COVID 19 was not the cause of his death - or at least it wasn’t mentioned to the family. Nevertheless, he and his wife had to observe all of the guidelines as if it were. And so, his wife was unable to travel with him in the ambulance to the hospital and none of the family were able to visit him. His death was a great shock to them. Their grief reflects the emptiness that his death brings. It is also a sign of the great love that they shared in life.

Love is at the heart of our celebration today. Usually before the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity we, priests have a discussion among ourselves as to the difficulties we have when we are asked to preach about the Trinity. Yes, we say the Trinity is the feast of the three persons in one God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Three persons but one God. In times past priests may have used the image of the shamrock or the three leafed clover to explain the mystery of the Trinity. After all that we can still ask “What does it all mean?” Another common theme for today is that the Trinity is a mystery. It is. Bishop Robert Barron draws our attention to the First Reading from the Book of Exodus and says that it is no coincidence that the Lord comes down from Mount Sinai in a cloud. Clouds prevent us from seeing clearly. Our finite human condition will never be able to know everything about our infinite God. However, this does not mean that we simply give up or that we have nothing to learn from today’s feast.

Maybe we will have read the scripture readings for today’s feast for cycle “A”. If we have we will have read about the encounter that Moses had with the “Lord”. Moses is the go-between - the go-between the Lord and the people. The Lord wants Moses to make sure that the people know that he is a God who is merciful, gracious, kind and faithful. These are some of the divine characteristics that the people must come to recognise. If these are traits of God’s personality they must have come from somewhere. We believe that they come from God’s very essence which is love. As Christians we say that not only does God love but God IS Love. It is this love that made God give his only Son, so that we might all be saved.

Sometimes when we think of the God of the Hebrew Scriptures/the “Old Testament” we think only of an angry God. This is a world away from the God of Mount Sinai. God is a God of tenderness, compassion, who is slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness. This is the God that Jesus wants Nicodemus to come to know. Not only this, Jesus introduces him to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the one who loves - the Son is the beloved and the Holy Spirit is the one who causes, enables this love to be shared.

Once again we are thwarted from celebrating a wonderful feast together. Yes, we do celebrate God’s great majesty. We come to a feast that asks us to pray that most difficult prayer - prayer of wonder and awe to God not for what God has done, but simply for who God is - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are uplifted in praise, we rejoice in the divine but we don’t remain “up there” (!) we are also brought down to earth by the challenges of today’s feast. If our God is Love and is merciful and kind, full of compassion and tenderness, we then

must follow his example. St Paul in his Second letter to the Corinthians gives us some very concrete examples of how to do this. He says that we must try to grow perfect, to help one another, be united, live in peace and “greet one another with a holy kiss”. It seems very good advice - especially for the times in which we are living.

I think it's good to remind ourselves on this solemnity that when we go about our ordinary lives simply doing things which bring people together rather than divide them, when we help one another, when we try to create peace in our communities we are actually participating in the life of God - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.